

Statement on Signing the Energy Act of 2000 *November 9, 2000*

Today I have signed into law H.R. 2884, the “Energy Act of 2000.” This Act extends key authorities that aid management of energy emergencies, specifies the conditions under which the Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve can be used, and updates the operating rules for the Weatherization Assistance Program.

The Act reauthorizes the operation of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, a critical line of defense against the threat of energy shortages that can cripple our economy. Extension of the direct authority for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve guarantees that the full range of means will be available to any Administration that may need to take actions necessary to secure our Nation’s energy supplies.

The Act also restores the limited antitrust protection for U.S. oil companies assisting the Department of Energy and the International Energy Agency in planning for and responding to an oil emergency. With this protection, these companies can continue their vital participation in preparing and implementing a coordinated and effective response.

As I also requested, the Act provides authority to establish and use a Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve with a capacity of up to 2 million barrels. This Reserve will serve New England and the upper Mid-Atlantic States where consumers rely to a great extent on heating oil to heat their homes. Creation of the Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve was a priority of my Administration, and I am pleased the Congress provided bi-partisan support for its inclusion in this Act.

The Act also amends the Department of Energy’s Weatherization Assistance Program, a program that reduces heating and cooling costs for

low-income Americans by improving the energy efficiency of their homes. These changes will make it easier for States to provide timely energy weatherization services and include a repeal of a financially burdensome cost-sharing requirement for the States.

Unfortunately, this Act also contains an objectionable provision that transfers licensing authority for small hydroelectric projects in Alaska from Federal jurisdiction to the State of Alaska. I remain strongly opposed to this provision because it could erode the Federal Power Act’s uniform system for licensing hydroelectric projects in the United States and impair the Federal Government’s ability to protect Federally managed resources.

The Act also amends the President’s existing authority, under section 161(h) of the Energy Policy and Conservation Act, to draw down the Strategic Petroleum Reserve by making exercise of the authority dependent upon a finding by the Secretary of Defense that the drawdown would not impair national security. This amendment is objectionable because, in effect, it conditions the exercise of judgmental authority by the President upon the agreement of one of his subordinates.

Despite these objectionable features, I believe that the Act demonstrates this Nation’s and my own commitment to providing for a more secure energy future, and I am pleased to sign it today.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
November 9, 2000.

NOTE: H.R. 2884, approved November 9, was assigned Public Law No. 106–469.

Statement on Signing the Veterans Claims Assistance Act of 2000 *November 9, 2000*

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 4864, the “Veterans Claims Assistance Act of 2000.” The Act reaffirms and clarifies the duty of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to assist

claimants in developing evidence pertinent to their claims for VA benefits. It eliminates the previous requirement that a claim be well-grounded before VA’s duty to assist arises. The